

1560/1134 (1-2)
THE

DECLARATION

AND

RETRACTATION

OF

FRANCIS-TERESA PANISSET,

CONSTITUTIONAL BISHOP OF MONT-BLANC
IN SAVOY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

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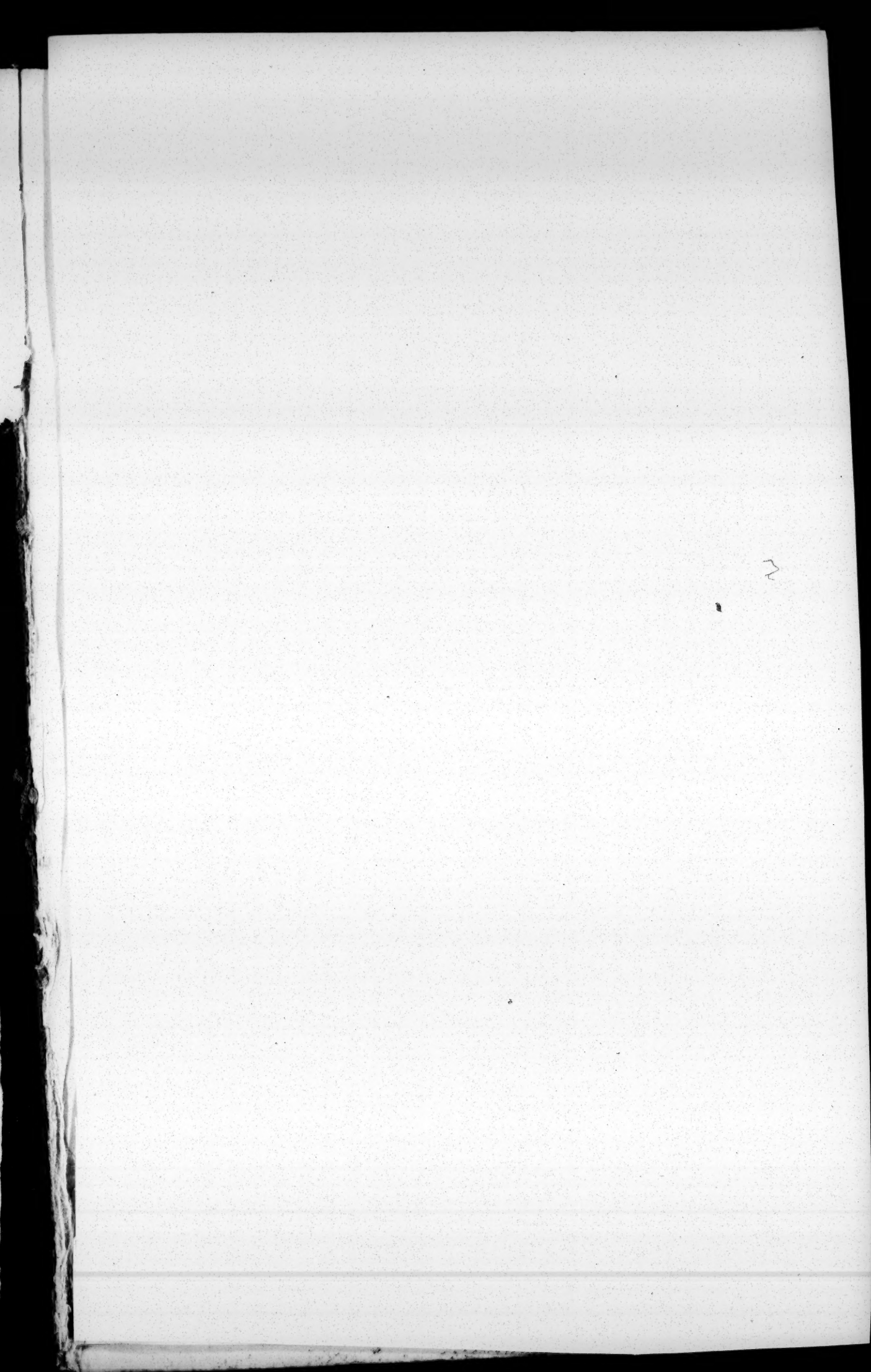
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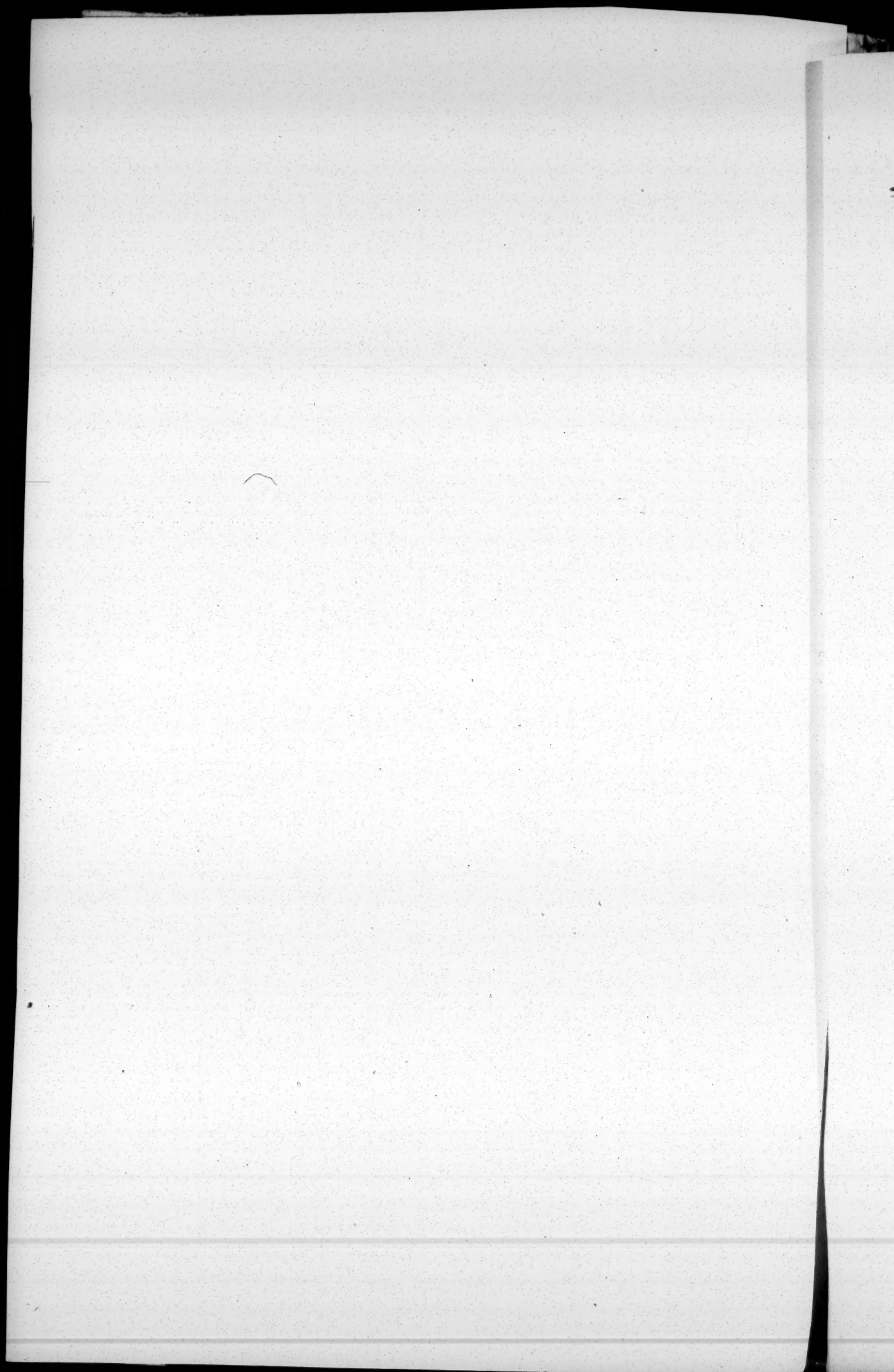
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RETIRED, this some time back, from a land, where falsehood was every day renewing around me its impostures; where hopes and fears, passion and remorse, crowding by turns on my agitated soul, prevented her from ever looking back on herself: I have at last, in the calmness of solitude and the silence of passion, taken a view of the unhappy race I have lately run. Each reflection I made brought a new blush in my face: and, rending the thick veil that concealed me from myself, discovered to my eyes the wounds of my soul, and the chaos in which my con-

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science was immerfed. Struck with horror at the fight, I was tempted to turn away from the importuning light: I almost regretted the time of my paft illufions. But bleffed for ever be the God of all mercy! his goodnefs has fupported my weaknefs: his grace has triumphed over my refiftance; and, pouring its light into the inmoft receffes of my foul, has made me fenfible how far my pride had mifled me, and with what exceffive blindnefs I had facrificed to its gratification my duties here, and my eternal welfare hereafter.

How deep! O how frightfully deep! the pit I have dug under my own footfteps! Oh! how fhall I repair fuch a multiplicity of fcandals, fuch numberlefs facrileges and profanations! Great God! I will confeß my transgreffions: I will declare them with that fincerity, which alone will make fome amends for the mifchiefs I have either caufed or occafioned; and your mercy, accepting of that facrifice, will blot out mine iniquity.

I was thefe ten years paft Parifh-Prieft of St. Peter's of Albigni, in the diocefs of Chamberi. There (fhall I prefume to fay it) I lived in that repute for virtue, which is generally allowed to perfons of auftere manners. But you, my God, who found the heart and the loins, you faw that my works were but empty fhew: that a fecret pride was the main fpring of them: and, that, full of the ideas I had



had conceived of my own worth, it was a matter of surprise to me to see it unnoticed.

With such dispositions, the head is apt to become censorious, and the heart refractory: one listens with pleasure to complaints against authority, and soon after inclines to lend them support. Thus it was that, forming a connection with Janfenists, I at first commended what I called their *virtue*; and afterwards took the liberty to arraign the authority that condemned them, which soon appeared to me to stand itself in need of reform: in short, if I myself remained submissive, it was only because I thought it prudent to do so.

O Pride! to what lengths, in your fatal progress, did you not mislead me! The woful day, that introduced into Savoy the reign of profaneness and licentiousness; that day, that ought to have pierced my heart with grief, and awakened all my zeal, was on the contrary the day that gave birth to my criminal hopes and misconducts. *French Liberty*, the baneful source of all vice, I beheld under the most engaging aspect: and *Equality*, the offspring of pride grown delirious, I considered as the dawn of the brightest sunshine.

In what profound darkness was my mind involved! France overthrown to her lowest foundation, shattered by a train of successive convulsions: the church attacked in her doctrines and discipline: the faithful Clergy nar-

rowly escaping with their lives from the ruffian hands of the assassins, who lined the frontiers; no, nothing of all that, could open my eyes. Smitten with the charms of the new Constitution, I laboured to diffuse my own enthusiasm among my parishoners: I announced to them the blessings of the reign of *Fraternity*: in short, I accepted the title of deputy to the *Allobrogian Assembly*, so stiled; and, though a witness to the scandalous scenes exhibited there, I still preserved, nay, and felt increasing within me, the hopes I had conceived of the new government.

Such were my dispositions when the commissioners of the National Convention published in Savoy that proclamation, so much longed for by the Unbelievers, and so much dreaded by the Faithful; which, though intended by its authors for the subversion, or at least the humiliation of the sacred Ministry, turned out on the contrary the means of procuring it the noblest triumph. The suppression of the bishopricks of Savoy; their reunion under the title of the Bishoprick of Mont-Blanc, the obligation of obeying the decrees of the National Convention; an order to all Ecclesiasticks employed in *the functions of the Ministry*, to take, without restriction or explanation, the oath of *Liberty and Equality*; such were the heads of that disastrous oath.

The errors it introduced into Savoy had been already condemned by the Pope's brief of the 10th of March 1791, against the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*: and by his brief of the 13th of April following, he imposed on all those who had sworn to maintain it, the obligation of retracting their oath. The bishops of the Gallican church had expressed their adhesion to this judgment; and, with a great majority of their clergy, had exhibited in their conduct a steadiness, which neither spoliation, nor banishment, nor death were able to shake. My own bishop, my superiors, the simple faithful themselves, all joined in urging me to do my duty. But, overlooking every consideration, and associating with the factious miscreants, who were overturning both church and state, I took the oath as prescribed.

By this fatal step I adopted a multitude of errors. The church, that divine establishment, that has for its founder J. C. for its means, the application of his infinite merits, for its end, the eternal salvation of man, I delivered up, as far as in me lay, to the hands of human power, and to the phrensy of political speculations. I saw without shuddering, the Civil power deciding that bishops, established by the Holy Ghost to govern the church, had lost their authority: I saw it, restraining or extending the jurisdiction of bishops, as it might that of the governor of a province; and these
unheard

unheard of attempts, that annihilated all church authority, that destroyed to the very idea of a Spiritual power, and sacred Ministry, found me without feeling. I hugged myself in my determination to pay implicit obedience to the power that ruled in Savoy : possessed by the spirit of illusion, I valued myself the more on that account ; and proud of my own blindness, I prepared myself for still more deplorable falls.

The Electoral Assembly soon afforded me a signal occasion, by appointing me to the pretended bishoprick of Mont-Blanc. The irregularity of the election, the novelty of the title, the usurpation of the sees of four bishops, all living, ought to have made me recoil with horror. But, O fascination not to be conceived ! I accepted without the smallest hesitation ; and, under the eyes of my own bishop, that venerable prelate, who commenced at that time his long martyrdom, whereby he gave his clergy the most instructive, and most affecting lesson, I had the assurance to go to the cathedral church to return thanks to the Electoral Assembly.

Yet the circumstances that attended that election ought alone to have opened my eyes. The electors had received from all the Communes in the dutchy, the most express directions, not to consent to any innovation in religious matters : and, faithful to their instructions, they almost all withdrew, when my election

was

was brought on. It was not by any means the work of the people, though I have often had the impudence to boast that it was: it exhibited nothing but the votes of a few unprincipled persons: and these votes, so degrading to my character, I called nevertheless an election *agreeable to the discipline of the primitive church*: but oh! what a difference between those ancient assemblies of bishops, consulting together with the inhabitants of a town concerning an election, and this assembly, where the deputies of the different Communes decided every thing by a majority of votes! But, my chief object being to deceive myself, I was not likely to be scrupulous in my choice of the means.

After such prevarications there was nothing able to stop my career. I wrote to his Holiness, to acquaint him of my election. This vain formality, so insulting to the Head of the church, I readily complied with; and, without waiting, or even wishing for an answer, I received at Lyons, from the hands of three Constitutional Bishops, a sacrilegious consecration. I took the title of bishop of Mont-Blanc, proclaiming, by its novelty, my separation from all the bishops of the catholic church, my disobedience to the sovereign pontiff, and the consummation of my schism. With omens, such as these, I set out for Annecy, the residence of the bishops of Geneva. This was the theatre,
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where I was to exercise the functions of my fruitless ministry. The town was filled with consternation: the inhabitants fled at my approach; and, by the dead silence they kept, reproached me with my crime. Escorted by the District and Municipality, I proceeded to the cathedral, there to complete the work of my intrusion, which I crowned with the oath of *Liberty and Equality*. Oh! what an oath! what an installation! Every thing announced the origin, the novelty of my ministry: the very walls of that venerable pile seemed to upbraid my audaciousness: and yet I walked out, as blind and as obstinate as ever.

A kind of fear had attended my first steps in this unfortunate career, and suggested some verbal explanations when I took the first oath. But emboldened, as I advanced, I soon disdained these precautions. Rash and headlong in the outset, then perjured, then a schismatick, and lastly an intruder, I trampled on all that was most sacred and venerable, rolling every day from precipice to precipice. But thanks, eternal thanks to you, O my God! You have opened at last my eyes to the light, and my heart to repentance. Vouchsafe to finish your own work: and may the humble confession of my crimes hasten down upon me the last favours of your mercy.

My obstinacy in schism was hurrying me into heresy. I had to destroy the deep impressions

sions, which the unshaken steadiness of the whole body almost of the clergy had made on the publick: I had to inspire the people with confidence, and to give them a relish for what I called *the truth*. Oh! that I had rather attended to the moving lesson, which that very people, by their constancy, gave to myself. Then indeed my repentance would have edified the faithful, and comforted the church: nor would I have to add to the remorse of my own personal offences, the still more excruciating grief, for the crimes I have caused others to commit. But far, far was I from yielding to reflexions of this nature. My mind was open only to such wretched pretexts as might serve to gloss over my own misconducts; and when, contrary to my will, any doubts or scruples would start up within me, I would banish them, with the delusive hopes of soon seeing the sovereign Pontiff, from prudential motives, sanctioning the changes that had taken place in a great neighbouring empire; and was only the more sanguine in my resolution to support with vigour, my new title, and all the innovations of the *Constitutional Church*.

My pretended Pastoral Letter was intended to answer that criminal purpose; and was no more than a vindication of my schism, and an apology for all the civil and religious innovations, that had been introduced into my native country.

You will receive, said I to the people, *this new pastor, who comes in the name of the Lord, to enlighten your minds*: and yet, sent, as I was, by the
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the secular power, I was, according to the words of the Council of Trent, no better than a *Thief*, and a *Robber*; and, separated from the church, which is the pillar of truth, I was sunk in the most profound darkness, and came only to preach up error, and to justify the most enormous crimes.

You will receive him, who comes to sanctify you: and yet my sterile ministry, dried up in its polluted source, and destitute of that Apostolic succession, which alone could give it life, exhibited no more than a mere phantom of Episcopacy, a scandal to the weak, and a terror to all religious souls.

You will receive him, added I, as the guardian of the true faith, of the sacred tenets, which the church proposes, and in sincere union with her Head: and yet my doctrine, in opposition to that faith, and to the constant practice of the church, destroyed the infallibility of her decisions, the authority of her government, and the submission that every faithful owes to the spiritual power of the sovereign pontiff.

With what deplorable temerity did I not presume to assert, *that my election, consecration, and elevation to the episcopal throne, too long vacant, were canonical, and agreeable to the discipline of the primitive ages of the church!* Happy indeed it is both for the people and myself, that such errors met, in my pretended diocese, with so few to believe them. Yes, the very simplest of the faithful

ful were sensible, that the manner in which the church governs, is a publick matter of fact, which nobody, without betraying his conscience, can dissemble to himself. From this practice of the church they saw plainly, that all episcopal Consecrations are made in consequence of Bulls issued by the sovereign Pontiff: that it is to him the church has left the right of giving Jurisdiction to bishops: that she has thereby abrogated the ancient practice of giving them ~~Mission~~ by the confirmation of the metropolitan: that bishops, canonically sent and consecrated can lose their authority only by a sentence of the church, or by their own resignation, accepted by the sovereign pontiff; and seeing that the church, far from authorizing my conduct, on the contrary protested against it, and against all the innovations that had been introduced, they concluded, as they had a right to do, that I and all my adherents were in open rebellion against her authority.

These truths, though so many notorious and palpable facts, I would not agree to. I boasted of my obedience to the authority of the church, whilst I subscribed to the changes in her discipline introduced by laymen; as if altering her discipline, were not altering her government; as if one could be obedient to the authority of the church, and, at the same time dictate to her, against her will, a new manner of exercising it. Thus it was that, following the steps of former innovators, while I affected a deal of submission
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to the church, I in reality destroyed her authority and government.

After lavishing my encomiums on decrees, whereby the church was overturned, I saw, and did not shudder at the sight, I saw, in the room of a divine ministry, endued with the power of saving souls, another ministry substituted, barren in the order of grace, and that could be productive only of schismatical and sacrilegious functions: I must needs also, in gratitude, make the apology of a government, to which I was indebted for my unfortunate elevation, and bestow the epithet of *religious*, on *French Liberty and Equality*; the first of which, meant by the very legislators to signify *unbridled licentiousness*, and emancipation from all laws not enacted by themselves, I called *the freedom of the spirit of God*: and the second, which was only the phrensy of human pride, and the wild hope of annihilating every distinction, which themselves had not sanctioned, I painted out in the colours of that amiable Charity, that ought to unite the hearts of all men: nay, and to both these expressions, now become the watch-words of impiety and faction, I fain would have given another less shocking acceptance; that is to say, that, under the mask of piety, I sought to impose upon myself, and to canonize the delirium of the French Convention.

What an excess of blindness! Though an eyewitness to the licentiousness, and to all the other mischiefs produced by the new system, I had the assurance to prefer it to the government, ever just
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and religious, of our own *wise sovereigns*. In the midst of the deplorable ruins that surrounded me, I had the effrontery to call the laws of the Republic *just and beneficent*; and, what covers me this day with the utmost confusion, I concluded with admiring *the Piety* of an assembly, that held nothing sacred, that tolerated every religion, except the true one; that persecuted the church with unrelenting fury, and, by its audaciousness, astonished the indignant world.

Ah! there is then nothing so clear, but passion can offuscate; nothing so atrocious, but it can undertake to justify. So profoundly dark was this blindness of mine, that I wished to see my errors adopted by the publick, and neglected nothing I thought capable of seducing the faithful from their fidelity to their pastors, and to the one only true church.

May I be allowed, O my God, to unite this day my thanks to those, which the publick owe to the true ministers of religion. It is their fervent zeal for thy glory that suggested to them those excellent publications, that informed the ignorant, that supported the weak, and held out to the perverse, a light they would not endure. Oh! that I had yielded to the impression those luminous writings made upon myself! Oh! how could I resist such pressing invitations of divine grace! Ah! I was enslaved by my passion, and would attend to nothing else. My pride dreaded to see itself confounded: and, instead of listening with docility to the truth, which would have restored
peace

peace to my mind, I was only preparing myself for new exertions, that would have for ever removed me from the light.

I composed the *Important Catechism*—"Christianly Political", I should have rather called it *Politically Christian*, since the object of that work was to bend the Religion of J. C. to the French constitution, and to inspire a vehement love for the revolution. In this writing I undertook to prove that the Civil constitution of the clergy bore no prejudice to religion: that, on the contrary, it restored the church to her primitive beauty. Now, there is not one article in that constitution, that ought not to have shocked me; and yet there is not one, but I affected to find agreeable to the Catholic faith. The new laws of France proscribed solemn vows: condemned the practice of the gospel counsels: and I proclaimed these audacious decrees as *God's own work*, as the happy revival of ecclesiastical discipline.

By the Civil constitution of the clergy, it was enjoined the new bishops, not to determine any matter, without first submitting it to be debated in the council appointed for each of them. This decree was an invasion of the episcopal authority, and destructive of the government J. C. had established in his church. But the practice recommended by the holy canons, and adopted by the most venerable among the bishops, afforded me a pretext, of which I availed myself, to justify this innovation. I affected to confound it with the ancient usage, which was introduced only for the
purpose

purpose of enlightening authority, and rendering it more amiable: and thus, depriving the bishop of the executive right of governing his diocese, I established a downright Presbyterian doctrine.

In consequence of the same error, and by a no less fatal induction, I undertook, upon the strength of some ancient precedents, to justify another innovation. Under pretence that according to the ancient discipline, bishops could be consecrated without Bulls from the Pope, I concluded they still could be so, after the church had rendered the apostolick Mandate an indispensable condition to canonical consecration.

Soon after, in opposition to the standing law of the church, to the express decision of the Council of Trent, and even to the light of common sense, I taught that Christ had annexed to Ordination the power of Jurisdiction as well as that of Order: an error that attributed to the church a constitution incompatible with her Unity.

Oh! how blind I was to the real constitution of that church, and to the sacred rights of her visible Head! I refused to the successor of St. Peter that supremacy of Jurisdiction, that he holds from J. C. and that has been ever and always allowed him by the church. That supremacy I reduced to a mere right of precedency: and, the indispensable necessity of living in communion with the holy see, to the vain formality of writing a letter. I criticised the briefs and decisions of the sovereign Pontiff; attributing the acceptance of them by all the bishops, to a
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want of examination and of liberty, to motives of interest or policy, to the undue and tyrannical influence of Courts. In short, my object was to destroy the authority of the church dispersed; thus accumulating errors upon errors, to apologize for my conduct.

I pass over in silence a work written in the same strain, entitled, "*The Antidote*," to speak of another much more criminal publication. I mean "*The Letter of a Philosopher to a Bishop*." Here I assumed the name of a philosopher, in order to give a freer loose to the resentment I entertained, occasioned by a letter of Dr. Pagel, the lawful bishop of Geneva. My pen flowed with vinegar and gall: I answered reasons with satire, and the weight of authority, with irony. I did my best, to varnish over with ridicule, that venerable prelate and his clergy. I called in Calumny to my assistance, representing those zealous pastors, who night and day were exposing their lives, to preserve for their flocks the deposit of faith, as men sunk in ignorance, and actuated by fanaticism. I paid no regard to any thing: urged on by that unfortunate passion, which St. John calls *the pride of life*, I sacrificed thereto the honour and dignity of individuals, the prerogatives of the church; in short, my own salvation, and that of my countrymen.

In this deplorable situation, I looked round me, on all sides, for wretches disposed to become my abettors, by joining me in rebellion against the church. I therefore imposed hands without distinction.





1560/1134.(1.)



inction. Ignorance, immorality, infamy of character, all was welcome: and, if I did not multiply my ordinations, I may thank the fewness of those, who would venture to become my accomplices. Strange blindness! I lived in hopes of surmounting those obstacles; these hopes supported me among the many humiliations I had to put up with, and inspired me with that fatal perseverance, that had like to have shut me out for ever from the road to salvation.

But the time was come for all illusion to vanish. A number of true ministers of Christ had sealed with their blood the confession of their faith: the rest were either in dungeons or in banishment. All over the land of France there remained only a mere human, a mere political church: a church fallen rapidly into contempt, by the corruption of its ministers: a church, which, in the intention of its authors, was to last only as long as was necessary, to prepare, by dint of scandals, the reign of irreligion; and, if possible, to lead the people into downright Atheism.

At this juncture I exhibited to the public a scene the most mortifying to myself; and yet, if I may be allowed to say it, the most fortunate for others; since it put a period to my exertions in laying waste and desolate the inheritance of the Lord: and, by representing me as guilty of the most odious apostacy, vindicated the faithful clergy, and must have opened the eyes of all such, as, by my conduct and writings, I had misled.

Nine months had elapsed since my installation, when impiety thought she might unmask all her projects. Reckoning up her successes, she persuaded herself that the time for bush-fighting was now over: that, now become the arbiters of public opinion, she might boldly draw up in the open field: that the religion of J. C. must vanish in the meridian lustre of philosophick light, and, under the *name* of *Reason*, no other guides be left to man, but the passions of his own corrupt nature: and thus it was, that after eighteen centuries of graces and blessings, of divine lights and communications, ungrateful, unbelieving men, blind to their own dignity, and delivered over to the vileness of their own desires, undertook to degrade the human species, by bringing down mankind to their own level.

Oh! how peculiarly wretched was my case, to feel all the horror, all the anguish I do, for such infernal designs, and yet to have the reproach to make myself, of contributing all I did to ensure their success! First, an order was issued for all priests to renounce all their functions. This order, which palsied my ministry, I ought, even under the dominion of my errors, to have considered as a mortal blow given to religion and conscience, and to have refused compliance: but an imperious voice thundered within me, that I had no right to resist the power that had raised me. Accordingly I went to the municipality, and subscribed the act whereby I renounced my functions.



functions. My conduct was consistent ; but was only the more criminal on that account.

Soon after appeared the decree of the Representative Albitte, requiring of all priests to give up their letters of ordination, to abdicate the priesthood, and, by an infamous oath, to bind themselves to renounce what he called *the knaveries of the priesthood*. At first I shuddered at the proposal : I still found within me a degree of fortitude, to prefer the horrors of a jail to the perpetration of such a crime, to resist the promises that came there to tempt me, and to brave the menaces that were afterwards tried upon me. Methought I now touched the moment of victory : but the moment I touched, proved that of my defeat.

Albitte himself came in person, and solicited me in the most pressing manner : he promised to alter the form of the oath, and that he would require of me no more, than just to renounce *the abuses of the priesthood*. To a professed infidel like him, no doubt, but the whole of priesthood must have appeared *abuse*. But I was willing myself to be deceived ; and, gross as the artifice was, I yielded to it. O weakness ! O shame ! O heart-rending grief ! I blindfolded myself : I tottered on the verge of the precipice : I committed the horrid deed of signing the oath, without so much as reading it. And what did that deed amount to ? To no less than the signing and attesting, in the most solemn manner, that the priesthood was a trade, grounded on imposture ; and, on that account, renouncing it for ever.

May I be allowed here to call the reader's attention to the blood, that was then streaming all over France? to the terror that hung over my own unhappy country? to the ascendancy of a tyranny, that held nothing sacred? No: I will make no apology: I would think it an aggravation of my guilt, to attempt the smallest extenuation of it.

Then was the time for me to protest aloud against the audacious, the perfidious, the unjust impiety, that presumed to rise up against God and his anointed: the time, to brave all the horrors of torments and death; and to shed, to the last drop, all the blood in my veins, for the preservation of a people so strangely imposed upon. This, in my Pastoral Letter, I promised to do: but the performance did not answer that presumptuous promise. Instead of that noble resistance I had pledged myself to make, I resorted to the poorest of all expedients: I waited for a less dangerous time to profess my faith: and the cries of my conscience could extort nothing from me, but that feeble retraction, which I addressed to the Representative of the people.

And, as if I dreaded the consequence of so dastardly, so inadequate a protest, I determined to go the next day, and take an airing publickly along with Albitte, that man, the terror of Savoy; that mortal enemy to religion, who had profaned the temples, demolished the altars, and destroyed to the last traces of divine worship. Vanquished by Impiety, I submitted to grace his triumphal

triumphal car. The news of my apostacy was soon blazed about ; and the bishop of Mont-Blanc vanished at the voice that had given him existence.

Confounded at all these humiliating scenes, and goaded by the desire of wiping off the stain that rested on my character, I bethought myself of dedicating to the patriots a work I had composed, entitled "*Morals.*" In this pamphlet I introduced a *Philosopher, a Patriot and a Neutral Observer*, emulously descanting on this interesting subject : I put in their mouths an encomium on the gospel and religion of J. C. I pictured out in soft colours the influence of the sacred ministry on the happiness of society : and such was my blindness, as to imagine, that, by this expedient, I fulfilled every thing that religion, the church, and the piety of the faithful required of me ; not considering, that, by tacking to my signature the words, *late bishop of Mont-Blanc*, I again freely, and of myself, subscribed my own shame and disgraced the religion, of which I had undertaken to write the panegyrick.

Mortifying as the picture is I have now drawn, there are still some strokes wanting to it, which even at this day astonish myself. Yes, for one and twenty whole months, I could find in my heart to live in this horrible state, fostering within me the criminal hope, that, by some lucky turn of affairs, I might be restored to the exercise of my ministry : I could find in my heart to celebrate almost every day our most awful mysteries ;
relying,

relying, as I rashly did, on a pretended regularity of conduct : and, with a view of securing to myself as many resources as I could, on the one hand, I wrote to his holiness, to be re-admitted into favour, and, on the other, I kept up schismatical correspondences ; I sent retractions to Rome, that were found insufficient, and signed at the same time, the encyclical letter of some constitutional bishops of France.

Great God ! God of all bounty and all mercy ! Oh ! how can I ever sufficiently praise your patience and charity ! It is you, who, notwithstanding all my perfidies and ingritudes, came first to my relief with all the treasures of your grace : It is yourself, who inspired that zealous minister, who prevailed on me to quit the theatre of my scandals, and to retire to a place more favourable to serious thought : Yourself, who dispelled all my illusions, who enlightened my understanding, who gave me the courage to confess the errors, that have brought shame and sorrow on this hoary head. Vouchsafe to crown all the graces, with which you have favoured me : hear the prayer I now humbly prefer ; and, for the honour of your holy name, receive and bless, render useful and salutary this publick profession of my obedience to your holy church, and of my belief of the holy doctrines she teaches in your name.

Without meaning it as an apology for the scandals of my last oath, I solemnly declare that I never thought but with horror on the impious form I was compelled to subscribe : that in the
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midst of my illusions, I was penetrated with the most profound respect for the priesthood; and that, in the man vested with that sacred character, I consider the envoy of J. C. the minister of his word, and the dispenser of his grace.

I believe and profess all the truths that are taught by the Catholick, Apostolick and Roman Church.

I particularly believe the existence of a sacred ministry established by J. C. in his church: I believe in the authority and infallibility communicated by him to the body of the Chief Pastors, whereof the Pope is the Head, to teach, rule and govern in order to salvation; and in the absolute independence of the spiritual power he has entrusted to the church for the sanctification of souls.

I believe in the hierarchy of the sacred ministry, as being divinely established, and composed of bishops, priests and other ministers: in the supremacy of honour and jurisdiction, wherewith J. C. invested the first of his apostles and his successors: in the superiority of bishops over priests and other ministers: in the necessity of canonical ordination, and of mission given by the church, for the lawful exercise of the ministry, and the validity of the acts of jurisdiction: in short, I believe the validity of religious vows.

I believe and profess, that the church of Christ is one and apostolick in her ministry as well as in her doctrine: that, to live within her pale, out of
which

which there is no salvation, it is necessary to believe all the truths of faith, which she teaches since the days of the apostles, and to remain in communion with her pastors, whom mission has placed in the chain of lawful succession.

In consequence of the truths I have now professed, from the fullest conviction, and in obedience to the sovereign Pontiff, I retract the unfortunate oath of *Liberty* and *Equality*, which I took in the parish church of St. Peter's of Albigni, pursuant to the proclamation of the 8th of February 1793, and repeated on the day of my intrusion, and at other times, in the assemblies called Popular. I detest those abstract, captious terms of *liberty* and *equality*, whose vague indefinite meaning rendered them fit for all the purposes of innovators. I acknowledge that, in the meaning determined by the proclamation of the 8th of February, these words tended evidently to the suppression of bishopricks, and the establishment of a new diocese by the secular power. In short, I renounce all the errors contained in *the civil constitution of the Clergy*, and expressly abjure them; submitting, from my heart, to the judgment passed by the sovereign Pontiff against that constitution: as also, to all other judgments, issuing from the Holy See, particularly the condemnation of *Baius*, *Jansenius*, and *Quesnel*.

I acknowledge that, having separated from my own bishop and from the sovereign Pontiff, the pretended church of Savoy, at the head of which I was placed, was a novel and schismatical church:
that

that having no mission from the sovereign Pontiff, who, at present, has the exclusive right of giving it to bishops, I received nothing by my consecration but a dead character, imprinted by sacrilege; and that the pretended confirmation I obtained from the *constitutional metropolitan* could confer on me no spiritual powers; and was, on my part, only a solemn avowal of my schism: that all the dispensations I granted were null and void: that out of the parish, to which I had been canonically appointed, I was not the lawful pastor of the parties that married in my presence: that, except at the hour of death, the absolutions I gave were of no avail: that the ordinances and instructions I addressed to the people, were entitled only to public contempt and indignation: that I had no power of giving mission to any priest: and that those I ordained received nothing at my hands, but a bare, lifeless character, equally fatal to them and to me.

I retract, to all intents and purposes, the approbation I gave to the encyclical letter of some constitutional bishops of France, addressed to their brother bishops, and dated Paris, the 22d of March, 1795.

I retract, in like manner, all the abovementioned publications, of which I am the author. I condemn them as contrary to the truths I have just now professed; being resolved for the future to have no other rule of my belief, but the faith of the church.

I re-

I renounce the pretended bishoprick of *Mont-Blanc*. I resign the parish of St. Peter's of Albigni into the hands of the reverend administrators of the diocess of Chamberi : and reducing myself to the state of a penitent, I beg pardon of the holy religion of J. C. that I have dishonoured ; of the church, against which I have basely revolted ; of the sovereign Pontiff, whose authority I have set at nought ; of the prelates of Savoy, whose jurisdiction I have usurped ; of my lawful Sovereign, whose paternal government I have slandered ; of the priests, whom I have ordained or seduced ; of the patriots in short, whose errors and delirium I have rendered perpetual.

O *Holy Church* ! whose *unity* I have broken, whose doctrine I have contemned, whose authority I have defied : *Apostolick Church* ! sole depositary of the sacred ministry, and from which nobody can separate, without forfeiting his salvation : *Catholick Church* ! whose very name is a sentence that anathematizes the *constitutional church* of France : *Roman Church* ! the seat of St. Peter, whose supremacy of honour and jurisdiction you possess in his successors : *Parent Church* ! the mother and mistress of all other churches, the *guardian* of faith, and *centre* indefectible of Christian unity : *Church of J. C.* ! the visible, the standing miracle of his power and his love ; the keeper of that heavenly doctrine, that has triumphed over hell, confounded human wisdom, and subdued the world, receive the wretch, who
separated

separated from you with so scandalous an eclat. May the repentance, that now brings me back to your bosom, become more public, if possible, than the errors that caused my separation; that the faithful, informed of my conversion, and moved by my tears, may cover my unworthiness with their powerful prayers, and obtain for me of the Father of Mercy, that he do vouchsafe to ratify in Heaven the sentence of reconciliation which I solicit upon earth, and expect, with all submission to the laws and decisions of that Church, in which I am resolved to live and die.

FRANCIS-TERESA PANISSET.

*From the Place of my Retirement,
this 22d of February 1796.*





